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Brice, Calvin Stewart

Speech... as chairman of
the Democratic State...

New York

[1895?]

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SPEECH

OF THE

HON. CALVIN S. BRICE,

U. S. SENATOR,

AS CHAIRMAN

OF

THE DEMOCRATIC STATE CONVENTION,

SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,

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AS CHAIRMAN OF
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SPRINGFIELD, OHIO,

AUGUST 21, 1895.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION: I recognize the honor and responsibility of the position which has been assigned me, and shall endeavor to fill it to the best of my ability, with perfect impartiality and due regard for the rights of each and every delegate. I can only succeed with your forbearance and assistance, upon which I shall rely, knowing that we have all come for the same general purpose—the success of the Democratic party in this State. We may, as we have often in the past, differ as to details, and have warm controversies, as to the manner in which and the instrumentalities by which we may best accomplish our common purpose, but this year, if ever, the Ohio Democracy must fight with unbroken ranks and against the common enemy. We must recognize the gravity of the situation. It is now less than a year since we were beaten in this State by nearly 140,000 plurality, nor was this a local disaster affecting only the party in the State. We suffered from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf. We were beaten in our strongholds as well as in doubtful places, and it is idle to talk of its being the fault of

any one man or any single act of the party, or of any of the minor causes that affect political success. The shadow of the great world-wide panic, the industrial and financial depression, low prices for all products, low wages or no wages for workingmen everywhere, despair for farmer and mechanic, terror and ruin for bankers and merchants, and at the bottom of all a false tariff system ruining in turn manufacturer and consumer and an unwise and fatally weak currency situation, had thrown over the whole nation a resentment against the party which happened to be in power when the disaster came.

A million Democrats remained at home; a hundred thousand in our own State; as a mute protest against the powerlessness of their President and their Congress to prevent or protect them from these disasters. Men from all parties and everywhere were freely saying that the Democratic party was dead, dissolved, gone off into the camps of the Populists and the Socialists, and had become mere wandering bands of fugitives without union and without hope. There was wild, fierce clamor against the President, against the Democratic Senate, against the Democratic House. So widespread was this feeling of hopelessness in our party that we have already lost our majority in the Senate, not to be regained in many years. Our majority of more than one hundred in the House of Representatives has been reversed, and our members in that branch of the present Congress is a mere handful. Is this the time for those who remain steadfast and loyal to the great party of Jefferson, Jackson, Tilden and Cleveland to indulge in quarrels and recriminations? Should we not rather welcome all who are willing to join hands and rebuild the Democratic structure on which, as we believe, lies happiness and safety for this Government and its people.

But, gentlemen, does not this Convention and the intense feeling manifested by those who attend it, and those who have sent their delegates here, tell the story that a change has come over the public mind; that the Democratic party is no longer prostrate; that its fortunes are rising, and that

it is quite worth while to be in the Democratic army, which already has the assured and confident step of a march toward victory? Panic and fear have passed away. The beneficence of Democratic legislation has already produced and is producing its effects. Faith is rapidly being restored, confidence re-established and business everywhere reviving, and it is now clear that it is only a question of time (either in November of this year or of next year) when the American people will reward the Democratic party for its profound service to the Republic.

The three great promises made to the American people in 1892 have been more nearly fulfilled and carried more nearly into execution than any three promises ever made by any party in any platform. What were they? They were summed up by Samuel J. Tilden forty years ago as home rule, sound money and free trade as nearly as governmental requirements permit, and under the very shadow of the disasters brought on this country by the Republican laws against which we protested and whose repeal we demanded—the Force Bill, the McKinley Bill and the Sherman Bill. These promises were fulfilled. The Democratic party repealed and wiped from the statute books the Force Bill, and gave home rule to this country as far as your National Legislature had anything to do with the question, and next repealed unconditionally the Sherman silver law, and thereby prevented the absolute bankruptcy of the United States Treasury, which was imminent. There is no human being whose judgment is entitled to the slightest weight who does not know that the gravity of the situation and the imminence of the peril was averted by the repeal of the Sherman law. And the third, and in the Democratic heart the most desired, the repeal of the McKinley Bill, was secured against the greatest obstacles and the fiercest and bitterest opposition, and in its place was passed a Democratic tariff bill, which will long stand as the law of the land. I speak with some fullness of feeling and knowledge of this particular bill, because I took great interest in it during its consideration by the Senate. Many of my Democratic

friends in Ohio were seriously disturbed, some of them quite indignant, at my course in the framing of that bill.

Gentlemen of the Convention, when sent by you and your associates to repeal the McKinley Bill, we did not propose to return to you with the McKinley Bill unrepealed if it lay within our power, and we did not. We had also been sent by you to support the Government of the United States and to secure prosperity and happiness to the people of this country. This we could not do if we abolished all taxes and made large appropriations, resulting in the bankruptcy of the United States Treasury, and consequent uncertainty and ruin of all your business, financial and industrial machinery. We could, therefore, not consent to the passage of a bill which did not provide sufficient revenue. Had we done so the confidence of the country in the ability of the Democratic party to administer the affairs of the Government would have been destroyed. Many of you believed the Income Tax should be put into the bill; some demanded it. I doubted its constitutionality. Had I felt certain that it was unconstitutional, I should have voted against it; but with the bill framed with the Income Tax included, sufficient revenue would have been raised during the past fiscal year to pay all the Government outgo—no more. With restored trade, however, it is now clear that the bill, even without the Income Tax, will provide about the amount of money that is required to carry on the Government, and we now have the satisfaction of hearing from every township and every ward in the State of Ohio that our judgment as to what should be done in the framing of the tariff has been affirmed and confirmed by events, and are prepared to go to the country on the Democratic tariff bill with its effect on trade, commerce, industries and wages, and it is seen that there is no indication of any attempt anywhere, except by extreme Republican protectionists, to again open a question which has finally been adjusted upon Democratic lines.

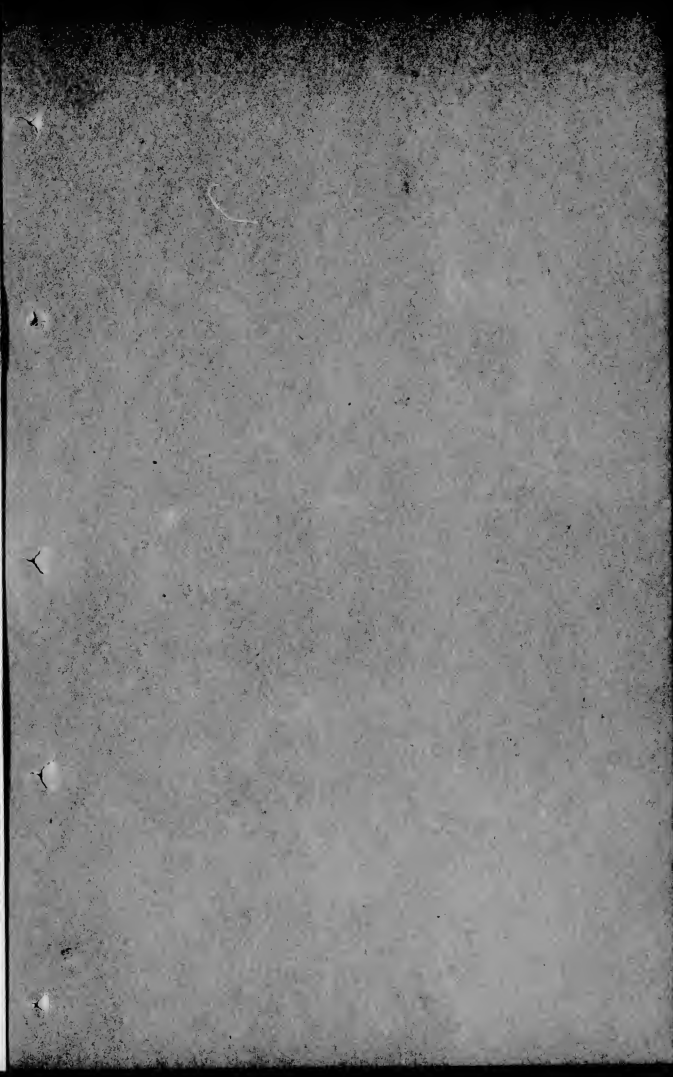
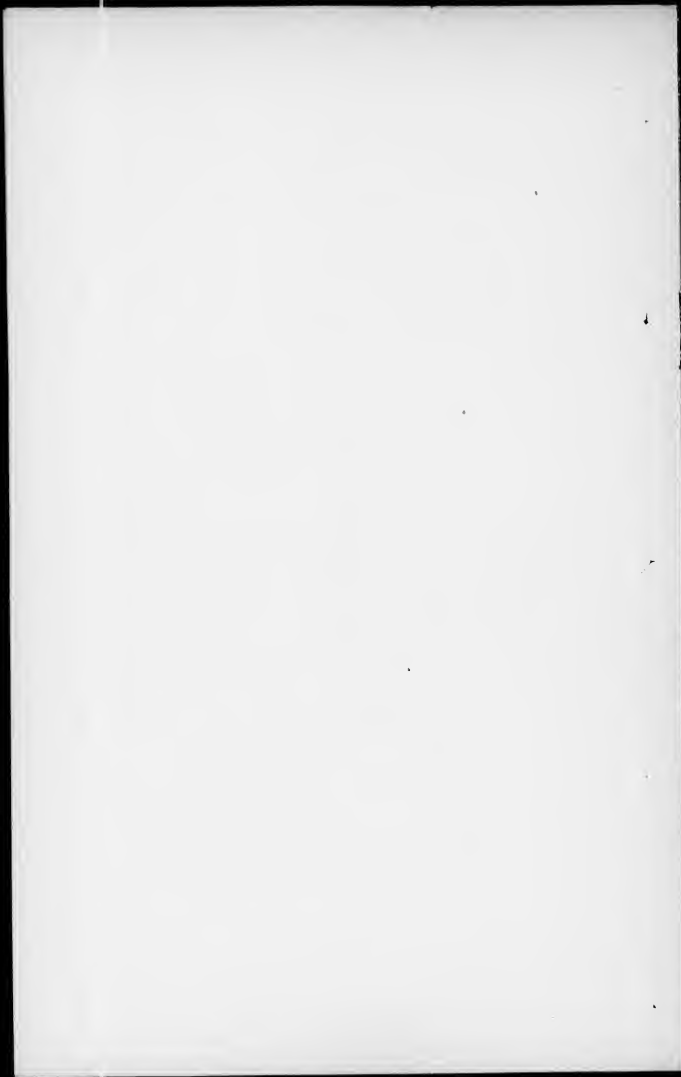
But, gentlemen, there is another question in which great interest is felt, about which there is a great difference of opinion, and concerning which we may hear more in this

Convention. It will perhaps not be regarded as out of place, or improper for me, as an individual Democrat, somewhat familiar with the discussions and the conditions, to make some suggestions in this Convention, which may be taken for what they are worth. I have a deep interest in the fortunes of the Democratic party in this State, and in this country. I attended my first State Convention in 1863, in the heat of the war, when we nominated Clement L. Vallandigham and George E. Pugh. I participated in the discussions from 1869 to 1876 on another branch of this money question, constantly endeavoring through all these years to have my fellow Democrats come where we all finally did come, to a sound money platform under the wise and able leadership of Samuel J. Tilden in 1876, and when I see to-day efforts being made to divide the great Democratic party just on the eve of its revival and resumption of power, on a theoretical and academical question, on which no result is possible, I come to this Convention to ask full consideration before taking passionate action. I come to urge the party in Ohio to stand on the platform of 1892 on the money question; to let the currency remain as it now is, and not to change our ground without full deliberation at a National Convention, and a deliverance from that body. I come to urge that declaration for free coinage would be foolish, because it would be an impotent and idle declaration. It would separate us from the National Democracy. It would drive from our support thousands, hundreds of thousands, who otherwise would act with us.

A declaration in favor of free and unlimited coinage of silver at 16 to 1 made by this Convention would have no practical effect, and it would mean an abandonment and disclaimer of the splendid results of your administration. You and I have possibly differed from Mr. Cleveland at some time and in some things, as it was our right, our privilege, our duty to do, if we were conscientious in doing so, but taking him by and large, he is the greatest statesman and party leader of his time. His Democracy, his honesty, his integrity and his continued attention to business, which

constitutes genius, have never been excelled, and in my opinion Democratic success in 1892 was largely due, as Democratic success in 1896 will also be largely due, to the character of our Democratic President, and to the high plane upon which he has sought to place his party and his administration. Do not understand me as suggesting the candidacy of President Cleveland for re election. No such question is now before us. You have heard the Republican war cry. Their statement that while both the tariff and silver question will be discussed, neither will be the issue in the sense of obscuring other questions; that the great paramount issue upon which the battles of both this year and the next will be fought will be the record of the Democratic party under President Cleveland; that the question will be whether it is to be endorsed and its policy continued or whether it shall be repudiated and its policy ended.

We accept this, and on it will make our contest, and of the final judgment of the American people there can be no doubt. The American people will in the end stand by us for home rule, that is to say, no interference by the National Government with the elections of the people; for sound tariff, that is to say, only tariff made for sufficient revenue to carry on the Government economically administered, and for sound money, that is to say, a currency of which all dollars, whether paper or silver or gold, shall be interchangeable and equally good for their nominal par in the hands of every man everywhere, and the Democratic party will be assured of a triumphant future.



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